

COMMUNISM AND THE FAMILY

— By ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAY, —
Commissar of Social Welfare of the Russian Soviet Government.

THE WOMAN NO LONGER DEPENDENT ON THE MAN.

Will the family be maintained in the Communist State? Will it be just as it is today? That is a question which is tormenting the women of the working class, and which is likewise receiving attention from their comrades, the men. In recent days this problem has particularly been agitating all minds among the working women, and this should not astonish us: Life is changing under our very eyes; former habits and customs are gradually disappearing; the entire existence of the proletarian family is being organized in a manner that is so new, so unaccustomed, so "bizarre," as to have been impossible to foresee. That which makes women at the present day all the more perplexed is the fact that divorce has been rendered easier in Soviet Russia. As a matter of fact, by virtue of the decree of the People's Commissaires of December 18th 1917, divorce has ceased to be a luxury accessible only to the rich; henceforth the working woman will not have to petition for months, or even for years, for a separate credential entitling her to make herself independent of a brutish or drunken husband, accustomed to beat her. Henceforth, divorce may be amicably obtained within the period of a week or two at most. But it is just this ease of divorce which is a source of such hope to women who are unhappy in their married life, which simultaneously frightens other women, particularly those who have become accustomed to considering the husband as the "provider" as the only support in life, and who do not yet understand that woman must become accustomed to seek and to find this support elsewhere, no longer in the person of the man, but in the person of society, of the State.

From the Genetic Family to the Present Day.

There is no reason for concealing the truth from ourselves: the normal family of former days, in which the man was everything and the woman nothing — since she had no will of her own, no money of her own, no time of her own — this family is being modified day by day; it is almost a thing of the past. But we should not be frightened by this condition. Either through error or through ignorance we are quite ready to believe that everything about us may remain immutable while everything is changing. It has always been so, and it will always be so. There is nothing more erroneous than this proverb! We have only to read how people lived in the past, and we shall learn immediately that everything is subject to change and that there are no customs, nor political organizations, nor morals, which remain fixed and inviolable. And the family in the various epochs in the life of humanity has frequently changed in form; it was once quite different from what we are accustomed to behold today. There was a time when only one form of family was considered normal, namely, the genetic family; that is to say, a family with an old mother at its head, around whom were grouped, in common life and common work, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren. The patriarchal family was also once considered the sole form; it was presided over by a father-master whose will was law for all the other members of the family; even in our days, such peasant families may still be found in Russian villages. In fact, in those places the morals and the family laws are not those of the city worker; in the country there are still a large number of customs no longer found in the family of a city proletarian. The form of the family, its customs, vary according to race. There are peoples, such as, for instance, the Turks, Arabs, Persians, among whom it is permitted by law for a husband to have many wives. There have been, and there still are at present, tribes which tolerate the contrary custom of permitting a wife to have several husbands. The habitual morality of the present-day man permits him to demand of a young girl that she remain a virgin until legitimate marriage; but there are tribes among whom, the woman, on the contrary, made it a matter of pride to have had many lovers, decorating her arms and legs with rings to indicate their number. — — — Such practices, which could not but astonish us, practices which we might even qualify as immoral, are found among other peoples to have the sanction of holiness, peoples who in their turn consider our laws and customs to be "sinful." Therefore there is no reason for our becoming terrified at the fact that the family is undergoing a modification, that gradually the traces of the past, which have become outlived are being discarded, and that new relations are being introduced between man and woman. We have family system and what, in the relations of the working man and working woman and the peasant woman, are their respective rights and duties which would best harmonize with the conditions of life in the new Russia, in the worker's Russia which our Soviet Russia now is?



Alexandra Kollontay, Commissar of Social Welfare of the Russian Soviet Republic, is one of the best known women of the Revolutionary Movement. Previous to the Russian revolution she had twice toured the United States, speaking in many cities. "Communism and the Family", her latest pamphlet, will be well-received by the Movement in this country, not only for its fine analysis of the historical development of the family in all industrially developed countries, but also for laying out in graphic form the basic lines along which the family of the future will develop as indicated in the new industrial life of the masses under Communism—the next step in the scale of human life.

Everything compatible with this new condition would only to ask: "What is it that has become outlived in our being maintained; all the rest, all the superannuated rubbish which has been bequeathed to us by the cursed epoch of servitude and domination which was characteristic of the landed proprietors and the capitalists, all this shall be swept aside together with the exploited class itself, with these enemies of the proletariat and of the poor.

Capitalism Destroyed the Old Family Life.

The family in its present form is also simply one of the legacies of the past. Formerly solid, compact in itself, indissoluble — for such was considered to be the character of marriage that had been sanctified by the priest in person — the family was equally necessary to all its members. Were it not for the family, who would have nourished, clothed and trained the children, who would have guided them in life? The orphan's lot in those days was the worst that could befall one. In the family such as we have become accustomed to it is the husband who earns and supports wife and children. The wife, on her part, is occupied with the housekeeping and the bringing up of the children, as she understands it. But already for a century this customary form of the family has been undergoing a progressive destruction in all the countries in which capitalism is dominant, in which the number of factories is rapidly growing, as well as other capitalist enterprises which employ working men. The family customs and morals are being formed simultaneously with the general conditions of the life surrounding them. What contributed most of all to change the family customs in a radical manner was without doubt the universal spread of wage labor on the part of woman. Formerly, it was only the man who was considered to be the support of the family. But for the past fifty or sixty years we have beheld in Russia (in other countries even somewhat earlier) the capitalist regime obliging women to seek remunerative work outside of the family, outside of the house.

30,000,000 Women Bearing a Double Burden.

The wages of the "providing" men being insufficient for the needs of the family, the wife in her turn found herself obliged to look for work that was paid for; the mother was obliged also to knock at the door of the factory offices. And year by year the number of women of the working class, who left their homes in order to swell the ranks of the factory, to take up work as day labourers, saleswomen, office help, washerwomen, servants, increased day by day. According to an enumeration made before the beginning of the world war, in the countries of Europe and America there were counted about sixty million women earning a living by their own work. During the war this number increased considerably. Almost half of these women are married, but it is easy to see what sort of family life they must have — a family life to which the wife and mother goes to work outside of the house, for eight hours a day, ten, if you include the trip both ways! Her home is necessarily neglected, the children grow up without maternal care, left to themselves and all the dangerous risks of the street, in which they spend the greater part of their

time. The wife, the mother, who is a worker, sweats blood to fill three tasks at the same time: to give the necessary working hours as her husband does, in some industry or commercial establishment, then to devote herself as well as she can to her household and then also to take care of her children. Capitalism has placed on the shoulders of the woman a burden which crushes her: it has made of her a wage-worker without having lessened her cares as a housekeeper and mother. We therefore find the woman crushed under her triple, insupportable burden, forcing from her often a swiftly smothered cry of pain, and more than once causing the tears to mount to her eyes. Care has always been the lot of woman, but never has woman's lot been more unfortunate, more desperate than that of millions of working women under the capitalist yoke today, while industry is in its period of greatest expansion.

Workers Learn to Exist Without the Family Life.

The more widespread becomes the wage labor of woman, the further progresses the decomposition of the family. What a family life, in which the man and wife work in the factory in different departments; in which the wife had not even the time to prepare a decent meal for her offspring. What a family life when father and mother out of the twenty-four hours of the day, most of which are spent at hard labor, cannot even spend a few minutes with their children! It was quite different formerly; the mother, mistress of the house, remained at home, occupied with her household duties and her children, whom she did not cease to watch with her attentive eye — today, from early in the morning until the factory whistles blow, the working woman hastens to her work and when evening has come, again, at the sound of the whistle, she hurries home to prepare the family's soup and to do the most pressing of her household duties; after an all too scant sleep, she begins on the next day her regular grind. It is a real workhouse, this life of the married working woman! There is nothing surprising, therefore, in the fact that under these conditions the family ties loosen and the family itself disintegrates more and more. Little by little all that formerly made the family a solid whole is disappearing, together with its stable foundation. The family is ceasing to be a necessity for its members as well as for the State. The ancient forms of the family are becoming merely a hindrance.

What is it that made the family strong in the days of old? In the first place, the fact that it was the husband and father who supported the family; in the second place, that the home was a thing equally necessary to all the members of the family; and in the third and last place, that the children were brought up by the parents. What is left of all this today? The husband, we have just seen, has ceased to be the sole support of the family. The wife, who goes to work, has become the equal of her husband in this respect. She has learned to earn her own living and often also that of her children and her husband. This still leaves us as the function of the family bringing up and the support of the children while very young. Let us now see whether the family is not about to be relieved also even of this task just mentioned.

Household Work Ceasing to be a Necessity.

There was a time when the entire life of women in the poorer class, in the city as well as in the country, was passed in the bosom of the family. Beyond the threshold of her own house, the woman knew nothing and doubtless hardly wished to know anything. To compensate for this, she had within her own house a most varied group of occupations, of a most necessary and useful kind not only to the family itself but also to the entire state. The women did everything that is new done by any working woman or peasant woman. She cooked, she washed she cleaned the house, she went over and mended the family clothing; but she not only did that. She had also to discharge a great number of duties which are no longer done by the woman of today: she spun wool and linen; she wove cloth and garments; she knitted stockings, she made lace, and she took up, as far as her resources permitted, the pickling and smoking of preserved foods; she made beverages for the household; she moulded her own candles. How manifold were the duties of the woman of earlier times! That is how the life of our mothers and our grandmothers passed. Even in our own days, in certain remote villages away off in the country, far from the roads and the big rivers, you may still run across little spots where this mode of life of the good old time has been preserved unchanged, in which the mistress of the house is overburdened with labors of which the working woman of the big cities and of the populous industrial regions have for a long time had no idea.

(To be continued next week)

CLEANINGS AND COMMENT

By John Brown.
Los Gatos, Calif.

Richmond P. Hobson—the courageous and kissable—press-agented as the hero of the Merrimac (think of the modesty of posing as the hero, among the countless millions who have so recently acted out the heroic part, unsung) held forth last evening in our Rockefellerized Baptist Church on—"America and The Destiny of the World."

Church and State (Chamber of Commerce rejoiced and applauded to learn that two of Paul's pernicious and misleading declarations to his "son" Timothy—"For the love of money (property) is the root of all evil"—"Drink no longer water, but take a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities"—are now refuted, exploded, obsolete. — "My research Secretary has discovered that the love of alcohol is the root, source and cause of all wars, all crimes, all poverty, all distress. The family of the drinker becomes absolutely barren in the fourth generation; on glorious, righteous, redeemed, dry America alone now hangs the destiny of the human race—therefore, dig down in your jeans right now and rush to save all other nations of earth from extinction by drying them up."

But, wait a moment—consider our recent boastful announcement and expensive pilgrimage to "make the world safe for Democracy"—our accomplishment the making of our own land the unsafe place on earth for Democrats—the most profitable place on earth for profiteers.

Consider Homestead and Ludlow, Bisbee and West Virginia, Centralia and Butte, Jefferson City and Atlanta, Leavenworth and Alcatraz, and our ten thousand other foul reeking jails and penitentiaries, where crimes against the innocent, and "crimes against criminals" vie with the horrors of the "Inquisition", and the "Black hole of Calcutta".

Consider how applicable to us as a nation the blistering words of the Hebrew prophet—"Thou hast taken usury and increase, and hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by extortion, and hast forgotten me saith the Lord God. Wherefore I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain which Thou hast made."

Consider how true today the words of a notable Brooklyn preacher of a quarter century ago—"The two leading political parties of this country, which alternate in its control, have putrefied, until they have lost all further power to rot; now there they lie! side by side, two great carcasses of iniquity, each one worse than the other."

Consider our divorce courts, and insane asylums—our "pride, fullness of bread, abundance of idleness, and indifference to the cause of the poor," passing that which incurred the destructive wrath of Jehovah against Sodom. Consider how, even now the very foundations beneath our feet, are rocking with the earthquakes, and seething with volcanoes of the same righteous indignation. Consider all this and our ten thousand other infamies and shames, and you get a faint conception of the colossal enormity that would propose going outside our own borders on cleaning expeditions, while so many foul masses reek and clamor for removal here at home.

"Thou hypocrite; first cast out the beam from thine own eye, and then shalt Thou see clearly to pluck out the mote from the brothers eye."

But to get the real "meat from the cocoon of Brother Hobson's discourse—interpret the hints, read between the lines, strip off the camouflage—"The Government has the names of two million men in this country who are ready to do what the "reds" have done in Russia"—Those who wish to overthrow our Constitution should leave the country and should be helped out," great applause. —So—you see our "hero" at heart belongs with the "shippers and shooters"; apparently, blissfully unconscious that among the first to feel the toe of the boot should be our unholy Attorney and Postmaster Generals—who, like they, have trampled in the mire our Constitution, and proved themselves the real "Criminal Anarchists" of hate and violence! The meeting opened and closed with the familiar anthem "My Country, 'Tis of Thee, Sad land of tyranny, For thee we mourn." No, that as not it. Having more regard for "patriotism" than for truth—they sang it right lustily in its original form, as did our forebears for a hundred years—the while they blithely bought and sold their dusky brethren, as cattle in the market place. Now could they do it without choking!

"Beware ye of the leaven of the church members, which is hypocrisy."

CAPITAL AND LABOR TESTIFYING IN COMMUNIST TRIAL.

(Continued from page 1.)

the strike the next day. I said that I thought something could be done if he was big enough to do it. The thing was to reduce the cost of living 10 per cent which would be equivalent to the increase of 10 per cent asked by the shipyard workers. He said, "Well, I think I can do it. And left, saying he'd be back in an hour. Then he left and he hasn't come back yet."

Dunnehan then described a meeting at the Mayor's office the second day of the strike between city officials, a committee representing the strikers and a committee from the chamber of commerce.

"The mayor claimed that the radicals had got control of our organization," he testified, "and he wanted to know if something couldn't be done to call the strike off that day. Finally he said that if it weren't called off by noon that day he'd declare martial law. As spokesman for the strikers' committee I replied:

"Labor has nothing to fear from martial law. Because labor hasn't committed any unlawful acts and doesn't propose to commit any."

"I reminded him that gas was flowing through the mains, because the strikers, who had complete organization in the gas plant, had investigated the hospitals and had found that that was necessary. I told the mayor that, if

he introduced martial law, he undoubtedly would find the responsibility of keeping gas flowing on his own hands."

"I reminded him also that the coal miners throughout the state also could join the strike if martial law were declared."

"Finally I told the mayor, 'We don't know, and you don't know, what attitude the soldiers will take if they are called in here. You don't know whether or not they will serve as strike-breakers. You do know they didn't enlist for that purpose.'"

"Mr. Hanson then said, 'Well if there is a doubt of that the quicker we find out the better.'"

"I replied that my attitude on that

point was different from his, that the strikers didn't want to see a test of that sort made in the streets."

Hanson's reasons for resigning as mayor of Seattle seven months before his term was up, were brought out by William Forrest, counsel for defense, in cross examination this morning.

"Why did you resign?" he asked. "Because of poverty, neuritis, the absolute necessity of earning a living for my family," Ole answered.

"How do you earn your living?" "By writing and speaking on 'Americanism and Law and Order'."

Ole then revealed that he has received \$23,000 gross in the last seven months of his writing and lecturing, of which 65 per cent is profit. The

\$7,500 annual salary of the mayor of Seattle was not sufficient for him, he testified.

Moscow, (N. Y. Bureau)—At a conference of kindergarten workers here for which there had assembled fifty-three delegates from thirty-four Russian provinces, it was learned from a report made to the conference, that there were in the soviet republic on January 1, 1919, 1799 kindergartens, which were attended by 99,950 children, altogether. On January 1, 1920, the number of kindergartens was 9,623, with 11,234 workers, and 204,

913 children in attend once. The work in the establishment of rest homes at Petrograd is rapidly advancing. Fifteen rest homes are already in operation, providing accommodations for about 1,000 workers. The opening ceremonies will soon be held.

PARIS (N. Y. Bureau)—A resolution to federate all maritime workers into one big union without regard to rank or grade was passed at a conference of the national council of maritime workers held here recently.